

## ASSOCIATED PRESS

16 March 1982

\*\*\*A268

U W BYLVYXR YR A0849

7AM-GOVERNMENT SECRECY:480

7CHANGES IN ORDER LIKELY: SAYS GERGEN

7BY MICHAEL J. SNIFFEN

7ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP) - PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMAN DAVID GERGEN SAID TUESDAY NIGHT HE EXPECTS THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION TO CHANGE A DRAFT PRESIDENTIAL ORDER THAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO KEEP DOCUMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC.

"I ANTICIPATE THERE WILL BE SOME EDITING. THIS IS STILL UNDER REVIEW AT THE WHITE HOUSE," SAID GERGEN IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS AFTER HE PARTICIPATED IN A DEBATE AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB. GERGEN'S REMARKS, COUPLED WITH A SPEECH BY PRESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR EDWIN MEESE III LAST WEEK, INDICATED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION MAY BE PULLING BACK FROM ITS EARLIER PROPOSALS DESIGNED TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR OFFICIALS TO STAMP DOCUMENTS "TOP SECRET" OR "SECRET" OR "CONFIDENTIAL."

IN EARLY FEBRUARY THE ADMINISTRATION SENT A THIRD DRAFT OF THE PROPOSED PRESIDENTIAL ORDER TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES SEEKING THEIR ADVICE. THE PROPOSED ORDER, WHICH DOES NOT NEED CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, MADE THREE MAJOR CHANGES TO EXPAND THE USE OF SECRECY STAMPS.

THE PROPOSED ORDER WOULD HAVE ELIMINATED A REQUIREMENT THAT OFFICIALS BALANCE NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS AGAINST THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW. IT WOULD HAVE REQUIRED THAT THE HIGHEST CLASSIFICATION, RATHER THAN THE LOWEST OR NONE AT ALL, BE PUT ON DOCUMENTS WHERE THERE WAS DOUBT AS TO WHAT THE CLASSIFICATION SHOULD BE. AND IT WOULD HAVE MADE IT EASIER TO APPLY THE "CONFIDENTIAL" STAMP BY ELIMINATING A REQUIREMENT THAT DAMAGE TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY FROM RELEASE OF THE DOCUMENT BE "IDENTIFIABLE."

IF REAGAN SIGNS THE ORDER IT WOULD REPLACE ONE ISSUED BY PRESIDENT CARTER IN 1978.

GERGEN SAID THE EARLY FEBRUARY DRAFT WAS NOT FINAL. "ED (MEESE) AND (NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER) BILL (CLARK) ARE GOING TO HAVE TO LOOK AT THIS DRAFT IN LIGHT OF THE ALLEGATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE," GERGEN SAID.

SOME DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS HAVE LABELLED THE DRAFT A "BLANK CHECK" TO EXPAND SECRECY IN GOVERNMENT. BUT LAST WEEK MEESE TOLD THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION THE WHITE HOUSE IS TRYING TO "DECREASE THE NUMBER OF CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS TO THOSE THAT ARE ACTUALLY VITAL